

TRANSCRIPT: Senior teaching assistant

Sarah Tyce

I began working at the school at 17 years old, as a teaching assistant. I found the job, from day one, really rewarding. We can make such a difference to some of these children's lives with a little bit of effort and sometimes thinking outside the box, and I used to leave work, and I still do on a daily basis, with a little spring in my step knowing that I've tried to make a difference to their lives.

I used to work in the post-16 department and most of our curriculum was based around independent living skills. So, if we were doing maths work we were doing money work, if we were doing English work, it would be about completing forms, and some of my fondest memories were cooking lunches with the class and, I think, that was the kind of thing that made a difference to their life in the long term.

I've worked with most age groups and we currently have children with extremely different needs. We have children who are on the autistic spectrum who are quite high achievers, and we have children who have very little physical movement and ability. So staff have to be extremely flexible because there could be lots of challenging behaviours in one class, to another class where the children are mainly not able to move around. There's lots of training, and often you get new staff so the training kind of rotates and you keep doing it.

We do have children here that pass away, unfortunately, so we try and make the time here as happy and comfortable as possible. It's a very sad part of the job but, again, it is part of the job. There is bereavement counselling when we have lost children and there is also a service within the borough that we can go to if we need to talk to somebody but, generally, the managers and leaders, the doors are always open if someone does have an issue.

It's all about team work here. I don't think we could all do what we do without each other and we all pull together and we all look out for each other. Our children don't always communicate in the same way as neuro-typical children but to see them achieve, to see their faces, to see the way they express themselves - it's amazing! Yeah, it's a really lovely place to work and I'd highly recommend it.